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Contact: Adriane Barnes, (501) 516-6255, adriane.barnes@arkansas.gov

Arkansas Farmers Market Promotion Grants Open through April 1, 2016

STATEWIDE, ARK. — The Arkansas Agriculture Department (AAD) and Farm Credit are pleased to partner together in announcing a new Arkansas Farmers Market Promotion Program. The program will provide grants to established farmers market organizations throughout the state that will help fund promotional items designed to build awareness of farmers market locations and offerings. Grant applications are available at www.aad.arkansas.gov and will be accepted through April 1, 2016. Grant recipients will be announced in May, and funds must be utilized by December, 2016.

Grants through the Arkansas Farmers Market Promotion Program are made available by Farm Credit. Any farmers market across Arkansas that meets the following criteria is eligible to apply: 1) The farmers market location must be a place where a farmer may offer for sale the produce of his/her farm at least weekly during the months of May, June, July, and August; and 2) The farmers market must be governed by an organized body in freely obtainable bylaws or market guidelines; and 3) On any given market day, the farmers market must have at least 50% farmer-vendors.

Farmers Market Promotion Grants may fund the following promotional items to build community and regional awareness for a specific farmers market offerings: signage listing names, seasons, times of operation, and location details; local advertising including print, radio, and television media projects; and even social media campaigns.

“The Arkansas Agriculture Department is pleased to partner with Farm Credit in announcing the new Arkansas Farmers Market Promotion Program. Grants obtained through this program will help to connect consumers with Arkansas agricultural producers. Increasing consumer awareness of the farmers markets that are located in our state will help to expand market opportunities for our producers while also helping to put money back into our local economies,” said Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward.

“Farm Credit is proud to support local producers with grants that will help promote area markets,” said Glen Manchester, president and CEO of Farm Credit of Western Arkansas.

“Increasing awareness and demand for fresh, local produce benefits local growers and the growing network of farmers markets across the state,” Manchester added.

Grants will provide cost-share assistance for 75% of promotional items proposed, up to \$400. Promotional items will need to be described in detail and pre-approved. All promotions paid for with an Arkansas Farmers Market Promotion Grant will acknowledge the Arkansas Agriculture Department and Farm Credit in, or on, the promotion. Applications must be signed by the farmers market manager.

With more than \$3 billion in assets, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services, Delta Agricultural Credit Association, Farm Credit Midsouth, and Farm Credit of Western Arkansas support rural communities and agriculture across Arkansas with reliable, consistent credit and financial services today and tomorrow. In Arkansas, Farm Credit associations are owned by the more than 10,000 customer-owners they serve. Through the cooperative structure, customer-owners have a voice and vote in the associations' governance. Members also share in the cooperatives' financial success through cooperative returns which total more than \$167 million since 1997.

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

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The Arkansas Agriculture Department offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Identification for attached photo:

(Left to Right) Farm Credit Midsouth CEO **James McJunkins**, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture **Wes Ward**, Farm Credit of Western Arkansas CEO **Glen Manchester** and AgHeritage Farm Credit Services CEO **Greg Cole**. The Farm Credit cooperatives of Arkansas awarded \$8,000 to the Arkansas Farmers Market Promotion Program administered by the Arkansas Agriculture Department.